All the State Governments bordering Nepal including Uttar Pradesh had submitted a proposal for strengthening border policing and intelligence infrastructure in their States. Since the items covered in the Action Plans were almost identical to the items included in the existing scheme of Modernization of State Police Forces (MPF), it was decided that requirements of the State Governments concerned would be met from the funds being provided annually under MPF scheme.

Escaping of mastermind of Ayodhya attack

1816. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether investigations into the Ayodhya Shrine attempted attack case reveal that the mastermind of the fidayeens, the Commander of Lashkar-e-Tayyeba has now crossed over to Pakistan;

(b) whether this reported escape of the king-pin of the attack to a safer place across the border is likely to hamper further investigations;

(c) whether the fidayeens had visited Akbarpur considered a safe haven because of well entrenched network of ISI-Lashkar-e-Tayyeba operating from there for sometime; and

(d) what is the present status of investigations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (d) Investigations are still in progress in the case of terrorist attack on Ram Janam Bhoomi-Babri Masjid Complex at Ayodhya on 5th July, 2005. The investigations undertaken so far have revealed that the terrorists made a preparatory stay for sometime at Akbarpur prior to the attack. Five persons have so far been arrested in this case. The links of the terrorists with their mentors from across the border cannot be ruled out.

Involvement of SIMI in Ayodhya attack

†1817. SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any evidence of involvement of the banned outfit SIMI in Ayodhya bomb attack;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the action being taken against this organization; and

(c) the details regarding number of SIMI activists arrested and the quantum of property seized till now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (c) Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) is an organization banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967. There has been no evidence of the involvement of SIMI in the attack on Ram Janam Bhoomi-Babri Masjid Complex at Ayodhya so far. No activist of SIMI has been arrested or property seized in this connection.

Negotiations on tariff concessions

1818. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is undertaking negotiations with Bangladesh and Pakistan on exchange of tariff concessions in the run-up to the SAFTA agreement for SAARC countries that is scheduled to come into operation from January, 2006;

(b) if so, what will be the status of the existing bilateral trade freebies that India has with Nepal and Bhutan;

(c) whether it is a fact that Indian Government officials attended a meeting in Kathmandu from July 20 to 22 for negotiations on the proposed SAFTA with officials from other SAARC countries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) South Asian Free Trade Area Agreement (SAFTA) is scheduled to come into force with effect from 1.1.2006. Under SAFTA a phased tariff liberalization programme is envisaged. In 2 years, non-Least Developed Contracting States (India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) will bring down tariffs to 20%, while Least Developed Contracting States (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal) will bring them down to 30%. Non-LDCS will then bring down tariffs from 20% to 0-5% in 5 years, while LDCS will do so in 8 years. Moreover, non-LDCS will reduce their tariffs for LDC products on 0-5% in 3 years.